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THE SUBSTANCE
OF A
CONVERSATION
WITH
JOHN BELLINGHAM,
THE ASSASSIN
OF THE LATE
RIGHT HON. SPENCER PERCEVAL
ON
SUNDAY, MAY 17, 1812,
THE DAY PREVIOUS TO HIS EXECUTION:
TOGETHER WITH
SOME GENERAL REMARKS.

BY
DANIEL WILSON, A. M.
MINISTER OF ST. JOHN'S CHAPEL, BEDFORD ROW; AND
VICE-PRINCIPAL OF ST. EDMUND HALL, OXFORD.

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1812.

THE
WORLD'S
GREAT
MEN
AND
THEIR
LIVES
BY
JAMES
MORRIS
WITH
ILLUSTRATIONS
BY
JOHN
RUSSELL
AND
OTHERS
IN
TEN VOLUMES
VOLUME
I
THE
LIVES
OF
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P R E F A C E.

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THE Conversation contained in the following pages is submitted to the Public at the request of several Friends of the Author, who conceived that, in addition to the interest with which any circumstances calculated to throw light on so dreadful a character might be received, some real benefit might, by the blessing of God, result from the publication. With the design of promoting still further such beneficial effect, he has ventured to offer some observations on what appears to him to have been the progress of sin in the criminal's mind, as well as to suggest some remarks of a practical nature, on the whole of the extraordinary and melancholy case.

The interview took place at the suggestion of a distinguished Member of Parliament, a friend of the late deeply lamented Chancellor of the Exchequer, who, having condescended to visit the Prisoner on the morning of that day, on a purely benevolent purpose, inquired of him whether a conference with the Author (who was at the time entirely ignorant of the communication) would be agreeable to him. The Criminal having expressed his full consent, an

PREFACE.

order for the Author's admission to the prison was given by the Sheriff. Permission was, at the same time, granted for a Gentleman to accompany him, who was accidentally present on a similar benevolent design, and was obliging enough to undertake the office.

The Author has endeavoured to preserve the utmost accuracy in the detail of the Conversation. He cannot, however, hope that he has retained every thing that was said in an interview of about two hours, and under the peculiar agitation of his own mind ; but he thinks he may assure the Public, that he has reported all the main sentiments which were delivered, and that, in many cases, he has been able to recal the very expressions which were used.

London,

June 2, 1812.

CONVERSATION

WITH

JOHN BELLINGHAM,

&c. &c.

WHEN we entered his cell, Bellingham arose from the bed on which he was reclining, and received us with great civility. I began the conversation by observing, that I was come to him, a perfect stranger, with no other motive whatever than his real benefit.

He replied, he was convinced of that.

I then remarked, that his great concern, as he was within a few hours of an eternal state, was to prepare for meeting God; and asked him, if he would allow me to enter upon that important subject.

“Undoubtedly,” said he: “no topic can be more interesting to me.”

I had been cautioned by my friends not to begin with the last dreadful crime of the pri-

soner, lest I should at once irritate his mind, and steel him against any instructions of a general nature I might wish to give: and especially as they suspected; a suspicion, however, for which I soon found there was no foundation; that some measure of insanity hung upon him as to this particular. I determined, therefore, to begin by opening to him the great fundamental truths of the Scriptures generally, and to leave the introduction of the other shocking topic till I could in some degree judge of the real state of his understanding.

I accordingly proceeded to explain to him, as strongly and yet as affectionately as I was able, the condition of men as sinners before God; the evil nature of sin; the purity and excellency of God's holy law; the infinite obligations we are under to obedience from our relation to God as his creatures, and from the blessings we every moment receive from Him. I told him, that as God saw the thoughts and intents of the heart, and noted every sinful imagination, desire, and motive, as well as all the sins of the temper and conduct, our transgressions were by far more numerous, as well as more aggravated, than we could possibly conceive: and that a right view of our character

and situation before God, and a genuine abhorrence of sin as committed against Him, were essential to true repentance, and were the very first steps in real religion.

I then stopped, and said to him, "I hope I make myself understood."

"Perfectly," replied the prisoner: "I know myself to be a sinner: we come into the world sinners."

This observation was made in a civil rather than a serious tone, and gave me little hope that he deeply felt the acknowledgment he so readily made.

I then went on to state to him the stupendous love of God to man in giving him a Saviour to deliver him from the wrath to come. I dwelt on the incarnation, life, and death of Jesus Christ; and especially on his agony in the garden, and his ignominious and most bitter death on the cross. I then spoke of his person, his mediatorial character, and his atonement and satisfaction made to God for sin. "The way of mercy," I continued, "is thus opened. God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. Pardon and justification are freely offered to every penitent, and the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit are promised to all that duly

seek them, to enlighten, renew, and purify the heart. This being then the perilous state of man as a transgressor, and this the mercy of God in Jesus Christ, let me beseech you to confess and forsake your sins, and seek humbly to God for salvation."

He said he wished to do this, and asked how these blessings of pardon and grace were to be obtained.

I confess, though this inquiry was not made with much earnestness, a hope did at the moment arise in my mind that some benefit would attend our interview.

"This is the very point," I instantly replied, "to which I beg your most earnest regard." He was evidently listening with attention, and I proceeded. "All the blessings of the Gospel are most freely proposed to every penitent. True contrition of soul for sin, and an humble faith in Jesus Christ, are the only dispositions of mind necessary for obtaining mercy; these dispositions proving themselves to be sincere, as they will certainly do, by every 'work meet for repentance.' If you, like the repenting Prodigal, will say, 'I will arise, and go to my Father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee;'

God will not reject your prayer. A broken and a contrite heart he will not despise."

I waited with anxiety for his answer. He replied, with a degree of indifference mingled with confidence, without the least shadow of real contrition, which at once disappointed the hope his question had excited, "I have confessed my sins before God, and I hope in his mercy."

"This merely cursory acknowledgment of sin," I replied, "is totally distinct from true repentance. The heart must be affected, the judgment convinced, the conscience alarmed, and the whole soul filled with sorrow and compunction. There must be a hungering and thirsting after salvation, from a deep and abiding sense of our guilt and condemnation. To imagine this general confession of sin, and this general trust in the mercy of God, to amount to Christian repentance and faith, is a gross and ruinous error. The Scripture speaks of an heart of stone being taken out of our flesh, and an heart of flesh being bestowed. There must be an entire change of heart, a new and spiritual life, a genuine and humble sorrow for every sin, before we can have the least hope that we are in the way of salvation."

The gentleman who accompanied me in my visit, here asked him, "Do you feel this earnest desire for grace and pardon, and this sense of your need of a Saviour, which has been pointed out to you?"

"I confess my sins," said the unhappy man, in the calm and unfeeling tone which he generally preserved; "but I cannot say I feel that sorrow you describe, nor that earnest hungering of mind after salvation."

I then resumed the subject, and endeavoured urgently to impress on him the nature and importance of a broken state of heart; but perceiving him still to remain unmoved, I suddenly stopped the conversation, and, looking him seriously in the face, said, "I can go on no further. Till there be some impression on your heart, some relenting, some desire after a Saviour, some conviction of the need of religious contrition, all I can say will be in vain. Will you permit me, before I proceed, to implore that grace of the Holy Spirit which can alone soften and renew the human mind?"

He complied with great readiness, or rather civility; for his manner was mild, and not at all resembling the ferocity or coarseness of the ruffian; and gave an audible, though tame,

assent, to most of the petitions I offered, saying, "Amen," "God grant it!" or expressions to that purpose.

When the prayer was finished, I said, "You see, the object I have been praying for is the very same which I have been endeavouring to urge you to seek; a contrite spirit, a deep apprehension of your totally wrong state of heart. Let me again press you most affectionately to enter on this important duty. Consider the all-seeing eye of God. He is now present in this cell. By Him we breathe every instant. It is as vain as it is wicked, to attempt to deceive Him. Before his eyes every thought of your breast is naked and open. No secret of your heart can escape his view. You may possibly give me a false impression of your character; but, remember, God is not mocked. And, O! what will be the misery you will endure, if you rush into his holy presence in an impenitent state! How unspeakably solemn is eternity! Never-ending duration! When millions of years have rolled by, this eternity will stretch itself infinitely beyond! Who can conceive the full horror of final perdition! Of being for ever shut out from the presence of God, excluded

from all hope, filled with all the misery which infinite Justice and infinite Power can inflict; and that without alleviation! And how soon," continued I, my mind gradually adverting to his last most horrid crime, though I did not yet expressly refer to it, "will this overwhelming scene burst upon you! A few swift hours, and the curtain will be withdrawn, and the eye of God will dart the fierce blaze of truth through your trembling soul! Every vain excuse, and all your pretensions to repentance, will then vanish, as the passing cloud is dispersed by the meridian sun. You will then be made to see the justice of your final sentence; and eternal regret and self-reproach will succeed to the present moment of delusion and obduracy. Fly, then, ere it be too late, to the mercy of God in Jesus Christ! He is now ready to forgive. He is now willing to pardon. He invites you to repentance. His Holy Spirit is still promised to all that ask Him. Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation!"

I am sure every reader will shudder, when I relate, that the prisoner replied to all this, with perfect apathy, "True, Sir: we none of us know what will take place after death."

“None of us know!” I exclaimed, almost interrupting him. “We know, indeed, nothing of a future world, except from the Bible; but this book,” I continued, putting my hand upon the Bible which was upon the bench before him, “reveals a future state of rewards and punishments, the bar of God, heaven and hell, and the grounds of the future judgment. Nor can there be any more doubt of the certainty of your eternal condemnation, if you repent not, than there is that I am now sitting on this bench and talking with you.”

I now began to be struck with horror at his state of mind. I perceived too clearly, that, though he professed to believe the Bible, he was in fact under the influence of “an evil heart of unbelief,” which led him to overlook or disregard all the particular truths which the Bible contains. The tranquillity of his manner, and the indifference with which he received what was said, only increased the dejection of my mind. I sat looking upon him, for a moment, with astonishment and grief, scarcely knowing how to proceed, when the friend who was with me took a letter from his pocket, which, he observed, the late lamented Chancellor of the Exchequer had written just before his death, and

which he wished to read. He first, however, endeavoured to convince the prisoner of the atrocity of his last dreadful crime, on the ground of his never having received any personal offence from Mr. Perceval, and also of the probability of Mr. Perceval having never known his real case, as he could not prove that Mr. Perceval had ever seen his papers, which had confessedly been transmitted to the office of a different minister.

The criminal hesitated, for a moment or two, at this remark, and then said, "O, he must have known of it."

My friend then observed, that, allowing that Mr. Perceval had known his case, it was still very possible that, with the utmost disposition to serve him, he might find it impossible or improper to accede to his request. To illustrate this, he read the note of Mr. Perceval, saying, that it was addressed to an humble journeyman printer, who had formerly been at sea, and who had submitted to Mr. Perceval a plan for manning the navy without having recourse to the impress service. Mr. Perceval, on receiving his application, had sent for him; and, finding that he had a wife and three children, and that he bore a good character, he engaged to pay for

the schooling of the third child (the two others being in the Royal Military School), and to allow twenty pounds a year towards the child's board and clothes. The letter was as follows.

Sir,

I send you a draft to discharge the following items.

Bill for boy's schooling	1	2	6
Quarterly allowance,	5	0	0
Extra payment on account of wife's illness, &c., and towards defraying any debts thereby incurred	5	0	0
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I received your letter to which you refer, and if I had found any means of complying with the request contained in it, I would have answered it; but that was not the case. I should hope, that if I do not comply with any such request, you have sufficient proof that my non-compliance is not owing to a disinclination to serve you.

I am, Sir,

Your humble servant,

Downing Street,
April 27th, 1812.

SP. PERCEVAL.

To Mr. Dickenson, No. 3, Princes Court, Drury Lane.

The wretched culprit took the note into his

hand, and having observed the writing and signature, said, in the most chilling tone, "This was very kind to be sure!"

I thought it now proper, as every other mode of address had failed, and his last direful crime had been introduced, to turn the conversation towards it; and as I found he spoke on the subject with the same calm indifference and monstrous apathy as on the general topics of religion, I conceived I could not begin with any thing more calculated to soften him, than a most interesting and affecting circumstance with which I had been furnished the moment before I went to the prison. I accordingly told him I had an anecdote to relate to him, which was sufficient, I thought, to melt a heart of stone; and then read to him a letter, stating, that the afflicted Mrs. Perceval, with her orphan children, had knelt round the corpse of her murdered husband, and had put up earnest prayers to God for his murderer. "Thus," said I, "while you, on a mere presumption of injury in your own mind, have assassinated a man who had never personally injured you, and whose amiable and benevolent character you cannot but acknowledge, his widowed partner, whose injuries from you are incalculably

greater than any you can even pretend to have received from Mr. Perceval, has, in all the poignancy of her anguish, been offering up prayers to God on your behalf."

As I was standing up to read the letter by a dimly burning candle against the wall of the cell, my friend took particular notice of the murderer's countenance, and distinctly observed, that, on hearing this touching account, he hung down his head for an instant (for he had before been stedfastly looking at us), as though he was much affected. He soon, however, resumed his former attitude, and said, as one recollecting himself, "This was a Christian spirit! She must be a good woman. Her conduct was more like a Christian's than my own, certainly."

I cannot doubt that, though this answer was made nearly in his usual manner, and was in itself a proof of a deplorable impenitence, he was still at this instant convinced in his conscience of the abominable nature of his crime, and found some difficulty in suppressing the voice of truth.

I immediately went on to urge him on the point; and, being now convinced that he could in no respect be considered as insane, replied to an observation, that his circumstances were peculiar; "Of your peculiar circumstances I

know nothing; but if I were to allow you all you wish, that you were injured in the most aggravated manner, still, can that warrant, in any degree, an act of blood? Can that justify you in taking what you are pleased to call justice into your own hands; and, on your own private opinion, without inquiry, without trial, without judge or jury, without one form of law, to hurry a fellow-creature, one who never offered you any offence, without a moment's time for reflection or prayer, into eternity, by the treacherous blow of an assassin? For Mr. Perceval," I added, "died, I believe, almost immediately."

"Yes," he answered, with an apathy which chilled my frame, as if he were giving me a species of information in which he had no especial concern; "he lived but a few minutes."

Astonished as I was, and even terrified, at the unexampled obduracy and impenitence of the man's heart, I proceeded as well as I was able to ask him, whether he thought he could make any reparation to society for the daring violation of its most sacred bonds? whether he could justify himself to the nation, which he had filled with horror, and consternation, and grief? Could he even excuse to his own con-

science an enormity which even heathens held in detestation ; an act which at once destroyed all the security of our ordinary intercourse in society, and which armed every one against his fellow ?

He absurdly replied, that he was refused justice.

I had now almost despaired of producing any impression, but I still went on. “ Can your opinion of justice being refused you, warrant your becoming the judge and executioner in your own cause ? Was your view of your own case to be considered as infallible ? Or, supposing your opinion correct, still can any provocation whatever palliate the foulest and most dreadful of all social enormities, the taking away the life of another ? Would you have justified any one who, on the pretence of an affront, should have dared to have planted a dagger in the bosom of your wife or child ? Or, supposing you had yourself been in Mr. Perceval’s situation, the prime minister of the realm, with all the private and public virtues of that excellent statesman ; supposing further, what must be the case with every minister, that you were surrounded with petitioners, whose cases it was absolutely impossi-

ble for you fully to investigate, and who were all equally positive in their claims; and that, in addition to this, you had of course all the weighty concerns of the empire pressing upon you; I ask, what should you have thought of a petitioner, merely because he had been disappointed in his application, imagining himself, a private individual, justified in assassinating you, the chief minister of the crown, incapable of intending him the smallest evil, and, at the very worst, only mistaken in your judgment, whilst in every other act of your life you were exemplary and benevolent?"

I here waited for a reply. The prisoner appeared unable to answer, and I feel persuaded that he was at this juncture, not only convinced of his guilt, but in some degree moved in his obstinate purpose. His eyes were filling with tears. But, unhappily, the few replies he made were, in opposition to the incipient convictions of his mind, of the same character as before.

I proceeded to say, that he must be aware, that in society, taking men as they are, there were many, and always must be, who were either oppressed, or fancied themselves to be so; but that every man in society gave up a part of what he might consider his natural

rights, and covenanted to be governed by the laws which protected him; and that a man who violated these laws by assassination was a pest, and a monster among men. "As to the persuasion," I added, "you had wrought up yourself to, that you were justified by your peculiar circumstances in the horrid deed, surely you must know, that men perpetually maintain the most pernicious sentiments with the greatest apparent sincerity. Indeed, any reflecting man would hesitate upon a point where he stood absolutely alone. I am sure if I held a sentiment upon any moral subject, of which all of course could judge as well as myself, and if the whole kingdom, every good man, every wise man, every religious man, united in condemning it, and condemning it with detestation, it would at once lead me to distrust both my judgment and my motives. Now, the whole kingdom is filled with abhorrence at this deed. They do not so much inquire about your wrongs; there may or may not be ground for them; but they shudder at it, as at one of the very foulest crimes which has ever disgraced our national character: and yet you are the man who alone is insensible of its enormity!"

He was silent for a moment, and then said, turning aside to a totally distinct topic, and yet with the air of a man who was meeting all my arguments, "I have confessed my sins before God, and trust to a general amnesty of them."

I had already endeavoured to expose this miserable pretence, and really trembled at the perversion and blindness which could advance it a second time. I replied, however, instantly, "This is the very deceit which is hardening your heart, and sealing your ruin to eternity. What! does sin require only this general acknowledgment? And does the guilt of blood demand no more compunction than this? Does this perfunctory manner of talking give the slightest evidence of a sense of the dreadful and horrid nature of your transgression? Does it afford any proof of a change of mind, of a separation in judgment and affection from sin, and of a desire to escape its fatal consequences? To talk in this way, is merely standing out against conviction, and presuming on that mercy of God which is only in Christ Jesus, and which will never save any who do not heartily and sincerely repent."

"When David," I continued, "committed

the dreadful crimes of adultery and murder, was he satisfied with a cursory confession of sin, and a trust in what you call a general amnesty? Was not his whole heart transfixed with sorrow? Did he not make every reparation to society in his power, by a public confession of his guilt, in the 51st Psalm? And yet, notwithstanding the uniform sincerity of his preceding and following days, did not the judgments of God continue to pursue him to the very borders of the grave; and is he not set up in the church as a beacon to warn men in every age?"

"And yet," interrupted the prisoner, with the same petrifying unconcern, and yet with an acuteness of mind which only served to pervert the knowledge of Scripture which he possessed, "Christ sprung from that issue!"

Such an evasion, at such a time, and uttered with the same tame and civil tone as before, appalled my heart, and for the moment quite baffled me. As soon as I could recover myself, I answered, "This was after David had repented and forsaken his sin, and arose purely from the mercy of God, in order to shew that Christ was to be the Saviour of sinners, by springing from sinners."

He then said, that no man could know all his sins, and that, therefore, a general confession was all that any one could make.

“No one, it is true,” I replied, “can understand all his errors; but cannot, and does not, every man know his prominent and flagrant crimes? And ought not the guilt of murder to sink deep into the soul, and pierce it with sorrow and contrition? Whereas by this general way of confessing your sins, the fact is, you confess none.

“Can you now,” I continued, endeavouring once more to reach his conscience, “possibly imagine that you are justified, in the sight of God, in this act?”

He acknowledged that he was not. “To stand before God,” said he, “is a very different thing from standing before men; and the Scripture says, ‘Thou shalt do no murder.’”

“How infatuated, then, must you be,” I rejoined, “that, acknowledging, as you do, that your act is a crime in the sight of God, you are yet insensible of its atrocity, and are practically justifying yourself on the account of it.”

Here he was silent. I thought I had exhausted his attention; for his erect position

was painful to him, on account of his heavy irons; and said to him, "Perhaps I weary you too much, by my long conversation." "By no means," he answered, with the mildness which never forsook him: "what can be more agreeable to me? I should be glad if you could stay with me the whole night."

He then began to recur to his peculiar circumstances, and observed, amongst other things, that he had been long in making up his mind to the deed, and that he was as sorry as any man could be, for Mrs. Perceval and the family.

"It seems to me," I answered, "that you have been allowing your mind to brood over your imagined injuries so long, that you have really quite blinded your judgment, and hardened your heart, and at length brought yourself to trample on all the checks of conscience, the plainest duties of morality, the first precepts of religion, and the most positive laws of your country. And thus, instead of submitting to your difficulties with patience, as inflicted by the providence of God, and confining yourself to lawful and peaceable means for your relief, you have, by degrees,

brought yourself first to 'commit, and then to justify, this horrible deed.

“And now,” I proceeded, “perilous beyond all description is your state. Let me again and again entreat you to confess and forsake your sins; to make a full and ingenuous acknowledgment of them; to fly humbly to the mercy of God in Jesus Christ for pardon; to repair your crime to the community in every way in your power; and to spend the few remaining moments of life in escaping from the wrath to come.”

As he made no reply, I went on as well as I was able; for I was by this time almost spent with perturbation of mind and fatigue. “Soon I must again meet you at the bar of God. I speak to you, therefore, as one that must give account. I beseech you, then, at this eleventh hour, to repent. It will soon be too late. Listen not to the pride of your heart, which would persuade you to persist in denying or extenuating the crime you have perpetrated. Do not, O! do not stifle the convictions of truth in your conscience. Remember, Satan is now endeavouring, by every device, to persuade you to harden your heart,

lest you should believe and be saved. Soon will the hour of mercy be past, and the awful punishment of a righteous God for sin light upon you. O, who can conceive the torments of a future state of woe! Even in this life, some individuals have been known to suffer such horrors from an accusing conscience, when God has been pleased to let some measure of his wrath rest upon them, that they have become a terror to themselves. But what is this to the full measure of God's indignation in the world to come!"

In answer to this he observed, for the third time, and with the same most deplorable apathy, "I trust in the mercy of God!"

"This unmeaning trust in the mercy of God," said I, with a degree of warmth which I could not avoid feeling, and which I did not wish to conceal, "while it is unconnected with genuine penitence for sin, and real faith in the atonement of Christ, is in no way a religious feeling. It is a merely natural, mechanical resource of a man in your circumstances, who is within a few hours of eternity, and therefore endeavours to quiet his conscience with this vain and presumptuous and unscriptural reliance on the mercy of God.

Even the thief upon the cross, when in deep penitence he prayed unto Christ to be remembered when he came into his kingdom, even he, suspended as he actually was upon the cross, proved the sincerity of his contrition by distinctly acknowledging the justice of the sentence by which he suffered, by checking the presumption of the other malefactor, and by justifying the character of the suffering Saviour. The Evangelist informs us, he rebuked the other malefactor, who was railing upon Christ, and said, ‘Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?’ and we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done nothing amiss*.’”

“Let me ask you,” I proceeded, “have you never observed cases of dreadful moral insensibility? Cases of men who by one course of profligacy or another have brought on themselves a total moral hardness of mind; so that they became almost prodigies of wickedness and obduracy, and appeared to be not at all concerned about their own state and character, while all around them were shocked at their

* Luke xxiii. 40, 41.

depravity, and perceived too clearly that they were blinded by sin?"

"Undoubtedly," said he, not at all exasperated at the warmth I might have manifested: "such cases are too common."

"Let me beseech you then to consider," I replied, "whether this is not your state. The whole land shaketh at your crime, and yet you remain unmoved and insensible. This is the most fearful of all conditions of heart."—"Surely," I went on, "you remember the history of St. Paul?"

He said, "Perfectly."

"Now St. Paul, before his conversion, 'verily thought with himself that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.' He was as sincere in his conduct as it is possible for any man to have been. And yet when he became truly penitent, this very part of his former life formed in his judgment the peculiar aggravation of his guilt before God."

Here the appearance of the keeper of the prison interrupted our conversation. Indeed, it had now continued two hours, and the criminal was evidently exhausted. He was still

anxious for me to continue my visit; but my other duties making that impossible, the gentleman who was with me was kind enough to stay with him for some time longer.

The prisoner then reclined on his bed in the easiest position his chains would allow of, and my friend read to him the 51st Psalm.

He afterwards asked him, whether he had received a religious education, and whether his parents were pious persons?

He said, that his father died when he was young; but his mother was a very pious woman. At the mention of her name he was sensibly affected: he wept. He added, that his mother was a truly good woman, and that her dying words were, that she wished to meet him in heaven.

He was greatly moved when he gave this account. My friend went on to inquire of him, whether he had ever had any real concern for his own spiritual welfare?

He replied, that in his youth, many years back, he was acquainted, in London, with a pious young man, and, for a short time, was under good impressions; but when he left London, and mixed with other company, they wore off.

My friend now left him, with a promise of returning again after a few hours; and could not help hoping, that, dreadful as his state of mind was, he was still, on the whole, in a somewhat better disposition than at his morning conversation with the benevolent Member of Parliament, at which he was present, and to which I have already referred.

He repeated his visit between the hours of eleven and twelve the same night. The criminal, however, had by that time unhappily lost every incipient impression he might have felt, and seemed to be, if possible, more insensible of the danger of his state before God, and more disposed to argue every point, rather than receive instruction.

When the way of salvation, by repentance, and faith in Jesus Christ, was again pressed upon him, he said, "Well, but if salvation can only be obtained in this way, what is to become of the heathen world?"

My friend replied, that it was not revealed to us in what way the redemption of Christ was to be applied to them; and he quoted the 2d chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, and begged him to direct his thoughts to the Christian dispensation, and to himself.

The criminal then observed, with the same monstrous unconcern about himself, that all good men would be saved, let them be Christians, Jews, Turks, or Pagans.

My friend replied, "The question is, who are good?"

"The 15th Psalm," rejoined the prisoner, with that knowledge of the Scripture which rendered his impenitence yet more frightful, "describes the character of a good man, the real citizen of Zion." And he took the Bible, and read the Psalm very distinctly.

This induced his benevolent visitor to question him very closely upon it, and to endeavour to shew him how far he had come short of that standard of Christian virtue.

He admitted that he did not come up to it, and again spoke of the mercy of God as all-sufficient, with the same fearless indifference as ever. He then proceeded so far in justifying himself, as almost to represent himself as an instrument in executing the justice of God.

My friend, shuddering at the blasphemous suggestion, and wishing, if possible, to startle his conscience, by pressing him to its fair consequences, asked him, in the most solemn man-

ner, Whether he could believe that he was in any measure under the holy influences of the Spirit of God, in an act so horrible as murder.

The prisoner hesitated in his reply, but at last said, contrary to his usual temper of self-vindication, No, he did not think he was. The Spirit of God was good, and influenced to good actions. This act was in itself a bad act, and contrary to the command, “ ‘Thou shalt do no murder :’ ” therefore he could not be under the influence of a good Spirit. He must, at that time, be under some supernatural evil influence.

This admission was made in the same unfeeling, indifferent tone as before, and was even accompanied with an assertion, that he was not under any vindictive or malicious disposition : and my friend was under the painful necessity of leaving him, some time after midnight, with the sad reflection, that all his endeavours had been fruitless ; and that the criminal’s conscience seemed to be “ seared, as with an hot iron.”

Such was our conversation with this wretched creature. A more dreadful instance of depravity and hardness of heart, has surely never occurred. We see here a man of some education, of good natural parts, cool and argumentative in his turn of mind, mild and pleasing in his manners, and, as it should appear, of considerable expertness in commercial affairs; a man who enjoyed the advantages of early religious instruction, who was not unacquainted with the Holy Scriptures, and who preserved, till the day preceding his atrocious crime, an attention to some external duties of religion. We behold this man commit an act of blood, horrid almost beyond example: and this, not under the sudden irritation of passion, but with the most cool, determinate, and cautious malice. We see him confide his dark purpose to no one associate, but, after a long and desperate preparation, wreak his vengeance on the first minister of the Crown, within the very walls of Parliament, with fearless obstinacy. We then perceive that he makes no attempt to escape the provoked justice of his country, but avows and

defends his deed, devising to himself a new and terrific code of right and wrong, and by the weakest evasion attempting to distinguish his motives from the designs of an assassin. In fine, we afterwards view this deluded criminal, with an inflexible impenitence, stifle all the dictates of conscience and of truth, and maintain to the last an unnatural apathy, both as it respected the outrage he had committed against his country, and the iniquity he had done against his God.

It cannot, therefore, but be highly important to endeavour to trace some of the stages of his sin in its progress, and to observe by what a process it at length produced so dreadful a result.

The neglect of the religious instruction of his mother, may be considered in his case, as it undoubtedly is in that of thousands, the first step which he took in the way of evil. How considerable the influence of his mother originally was, may be gathered from the poignant regret which the mention of her name excited, even after all the obduracy he had manifested on every other point. It is certain, that few depart very far from the paths of rectitude, so long as they con-

tinue to cherish any due reverence for their parents. And we may fairly regard his rejection of this sacred yoke, as one great cause of his future ruin.

An obstinate self-will, when removed from his mother's immediate care, is the next step in his career of iniquity. I find, that, at the age of fourteen*, he was placed as an apprentice with a Mr. Love, a jeweller, a man of excellent character, in Whitechapel. Here he was first very perverse and troublesome; and at last ran away from his master, and went to sea in the Hartwell Indiaman; thus betraying, in his boyish years, that dreadful obstinacy of mind which hurried him on at last to the foulest of all crimes.

The resistance he offered to the convictions of religion, which he received when a young

* His father was a land-surveyor and miniature-painter: his mother, the daughter of a respectable country gentleman of St. Neots, in the county of Huntingdon. They were married in 1768 or 69, in London. John was their second child, and was born in London about 1771. The father, after his birth, purchased a house at St. Neots, and resided in it till about 1775, when he returned to London, and lived in Titchfield Street, Oxford Street. In 1779, he discovered marks of mental derangement, and was placed in St. Luke's Hospital. At the end of a twelvemonth he returned home as incurable, and died soon after.

man, and of which mention is made in the preceding account, must also be considered as undoubtedly contributing a most material part to the increasing influence of sin on his mind. The religious instructions of his first years were then recalled to his memory, and impressed on his conscience. But these being opposed and effaced, this voice of the Spirit neglected and despised, the notices and remonstrances of an alarmed conscience appeased and stupified, we need not wonder at any hardness of heart which followed. O! let all, and especially the young, who tremble at the case of this assassin, remember, that one cause of it is to be traced back to the violence done in early life to the dictates of truth in his own breast. Even Bellingham once was concerned for his soul, and once seemed determined to escape the wrath to come! Nor let them forget, that similar convictions, in every other case as well as his, if they do not issue in real piety and genuine penitence, leave the heart tenfold more obdurate than it was before.

In his voyage out from England, I am informed, he was shipwrecked off Bonavista, one of the Cape Verd islands, and escaped, with only one more, in an open boat. Un-

affected with this deliverance, on his return to England he lived an unsettled, and in some instances unprincipled, life till about the year 1793, when he persuaded his excellent mother, from the remnant of her fortune, which he had chiefly exhausted, to establish him in a shop, as a tradesman, in Oxford Street. Here he not only failed in a very short time, but was believed, though it never was legally proved, to have set fire to his own house. These particulars only serve to throw still further light on the manner in which his dreadful character was at length fully formed.

His adventurous and rash conduct in Russia presents us with another stage in his deplorable progress. There is every reason to conclude, that his transactions here were as suspicious as they are known to have been in the former part of his life. It sufficiently appears, at least, that his acuteness and dexterity induced him to venture on hasty and unmeasured schemes of aggrandisement. Not content with moderate and quiet exertions for the maintenance of his family (for he was now married to a daughter of a respectable merchant in Newry, to whom, I understand, he has conducted himself with personal kindness and affection), nothing would

satisfy him but new and peculiar projects, in which the characteristic inflexibility of his temper naturally prevailed. No line of conduct can tend more fatally to stupify the conscience than this desperate spirit. He that is not content with safe and ordinary measures of traffic, but is ready to venture, not only his own property, but perhaps that which is entrusted to him by others, on the slender hope of exorbitant gain, is in danger of becoming the prey of every turbulent and dreadful passion. And so many in these days have fallen a sacrifice, in a greater or less degree, to temptations of this class, that it seems peculiarly important to hold out the horrible case of Bellingham as a warning of what may possibly be the fatal issue of such mad speculations*.

The natural consequence of the general dispositions of this infatuated man was, to attempt to cast the blame of the calamities, in which

* His relatives, I find, still indulge the opinion that his mind was unsound on his Russian affairs. I can only observe, that the long conversation I had with him, which partly turned on that subject, as well as the information I have since received of his whole previous character, totally forbid my admitting a supposition for which there appears to me to be no just foundation, and which would obviously open a door to the most dreadful consequences.

he involved himself, upon others. This is another step in his unhappy course. Instead of acknowledging with candour his mercantile errors, and repairing them by pursuing ordinary plans of traffic, he seems to have been governed through life, and especially in his Russian concerns, by his wretched obstinacy of mind, and to have at last acquired a malignant habit of considering those connected with him to be the causes of his troubles. This has been the tendency of human nature ever since the fall. We are too proud to acknowledge our faults. Like our first parents, we prefer to transfer the criminality of them on those around us. Thus Bellingham hardened his heart, persevered in his imprudent and unjust plans, and spurned the path of humble and honest industry. In his case we observe, that those to whom he principally imputed blame, were the persons entrusted with the government of the country. How unjust such an imputation was, is now rendered perfectly clear by the letter of Lord L. Gower. And yet how common are similar imputations! Every obstacle thrown in the way of commerce by the artifices of the enemy, every failure in harvest inflicted by the hand of God, is now boldly,

however unjustly, ascribed to the mal-practices of ministers. By this gross misconception, in no inconsiderable degree, has the turbulent state of many parts of the country been fomented. How important a duty, then, is it, instead of throwing the blame on others, to take it, as in most cases we ought, to ourselves, and to maintain, from a principle of conscience, those duties of obedient and loyal subjects which the Scriptures so imperiously enjoin. This would tend at once to induce a spirit of submission to what we suffer, and be the most likely way of averting the judgments of God.

But to proceed. The dark, suspicious, and by this time guilty, mind of Bellingham, seems at last, after a long train of misfortunes, to have been absorbed in gloomy meditations on the calamities which he was too proud and inflexible to take the best methods of alleviating. Brooding, in dire dejection, over his embarrassed affairs, he now beheld all with whom he was concerned through the distorting medium of disappointed selfishness. He seems to have persuaded himself, that every repulse was an affront, every refusal an intentional injury, and

every trouble the result of injustice. Stung with self-reproach, and infuriated by frustrated ambition. every object became tinged with the disorder of his own mind. His wrongs were, in his own view, the greatest ever endured. His case demanded attention beyond all others. His claims wanted only to be known, to be acknowledged and allowed. He was not a man to seek the advice or follow the suggestions of a friend. An unbending haughtiness could choose only its own plans, and, when these failed, dwell in secret and foreboding contemplation on its sorrows.

In the mean time, as these dark passions were gathering strength, the religious feelings he had once known, and his resistance to which, when they were most powerful, we have already noticed, were rapidly losing their remaining influence on his conscience. He appears to have had no view of God's providence as ordering the events of human life; no conception of the virtues of patience and submission; no impression of the duty of the forgiveness of injuries; no recollection of the great resource to man in trouble, the throne of God. His pious mother had long fallen a victim to afflictions oc-

occasioned chiefly by her unprincipled child*, and could no longer present any impediments to the full tide of his malignant passions; and as these bore the sway, all memory of Christian repentance and faith, of humility and prayer, of resignation and hope, was obliterated. Let this part of his progress in sin be particularly remarked. Satan can drive no one to desperate measures, while any remembrance of that relief in trouble, that support in affliction, that consolation in sorrow, which are to be found in the grace of God in Christ Jesus, sheds a beam of light across his path. A practical disbelief of all the fundamental duties, resources, and hopes of Christianity, leaves the heart of man unprotected against the assaults and temptations of Satan.

After a long course of misfortunes, operating on a disposition so perverse and inflexible, and unchecked by the laws of religion; all his schemes of relieving his circumstances proving abortive, the government of his country of necessity resisting his unfounded claims, and the prospect of subsisting longer by address and speculation becoming daily more uncertain, the

* She died at Liverpool, weighed down with trouble, in the year 1802.

fell design of avenging his own wrongs may be supposed to have entered his breast. That he at first rejected the thought with abhorrence, may be easily credited. He told me, indeed, he was a long time in making up his mind to it. Such a crime could not be easily resolved on, even by Bellingham. It must have taken no little time ere conscience could be quite silenced, ere the first principles of humanity could be extirpated, and all the dictates of morality and religion be spurned and trampled on. It must have been a work of some time, to have formed to himself a false and dreadful code of morals, in order to justify to himself the taking what he called justice into his own hands. The excuses with which his gloomy and acute mind would furnish him, could not all at once assume, even to his view, the weight and importance of truth. It may be doubted, even at last, strong as we know a delusion may become, whether he fully believed the lie on which he professed to repose. I feel assured that he was convinced in his conscience of the fallacy of his pleas, at least during some part of my conversation with him. If, however, we suppose them to have taken full possession of his mind; if we allow that the miserable, and

hollow, and detestable pretence, of having no private malice against the minister whose death he meditated, of wishing to set an example to statesmen in general, and of being capable of vindicating his deed before a jury of his countrymen, actually ruled and shackled his understanding, which I will not undertake absolutely to deny, then his case affords a still more melancholy proof of the dreadful evasions to which a rational being may at length resort, when the laws of God and man are once rejected, and the heart is resigned to the foul dictates of malice and revenge.

The diabolical project being once deliberately formed, he seems to have proceeded to its execution with a degree of calmness and obduracy to which I know of no parallel. The resolution of perpetrating the horrid deed appears to have so completely relieved him from the hesitations which the voice of nature and of conscience must have long interposed, that he could lend his mind to the most solemn or the most trifling of all engagements, according as the occasions of life brought them before him. On the day before the fatal crime, with the purpose of murder matured in his breast, he could be present twice, unmoved, at the

public service of Almighty God*; and the very hour before the murder, he could contribute to the amusement of the children of the house where he lodged, by conducting them to a public spectacle!

After the perpetration of the murder, we are not so much called upon to trace the progress of a further obduracy, his dreadful character being then fully developed, as to notice very briefly the methods by which he continued to resist the voice of truth, and died, as he lived, obstinate and insensible.

The perverse inflexibility of his character seems here to have had a principal influence. The deed was done, and he was resolved that nothing should prevent him from defending it. He was acute enough to see the consequences of an ingenuous confession to all his fallacious schemes of self-vindication. He had accordingly taken his ground, and there he obstinately stood; and the weakness of his allegations only increased the firmness by which he was determined to maintain them.

The gratification which his malignant disposition received from the revenge he had

* At the Chapel of the Foundling Hospital.

exacted, evidently had its weight. He appeared to me to conceal but very imperfectly the delight he felt at the complete success of his attempt, and to cherish with satisfaction the recollection of the warning he conceived he had given to public men.

Added to this, he was actuated by a love of applause, an affectation of distinction and notice. Horrid as the idea is, the letter he sent after his being committed to Newgate, to the person with whom he lodged, evidently betrayed the pleasure he derived from having attracted public attention. It may even be doubted, so hardened was he to all moral sensibility, whether the desire of exhibiting what he termed the justice of his case, to his country, had not contributed to the forming of his mind to the dreadful deed: it certainly had its share in repressing any risings of remorse after its perpetration.

There can, further, be no doubt, that the excuses by which he attempted to palliate his crime tended greatly to confirm his impenitence. His general, unmeaning trust in the mercy of God, without one emotion of repentance, without any confession of sins, or any faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, had the

same operation : while a secret unbelief of God's solemn denunciations against sin, like a poison, infected his whole soul. He presumed on a rest after death for no one reason except that he desired it, and fancied, from his impression of the troubles which his sins had brought upon him in this world, that any change must be for the better. He dismissed, in like manner, every apprehension of future punishment, for no other reason than that he wished to escape it.

There is too much reason to dread, that, in addition to these causes, he was delivered, in just judgment, by that God whom he had so long wilfully provoked, to "a reprobate mind;" and that thus being given up to "the lusts of his own heart," and permitted to "follow his own devices," he steadily resisted all the calls of conscience, and persevered in his wretched indifference and self-justification to his last hour.



IF this hasty review should not be thought to throw complete light on this mysterious case, it will at least afford us such points of

consideration as may, under the blessing of God, yield important instruction to the reflecting mind.

We may remark, then, in the first place, *How great is the depravity of the human heart!* Let the attentive reader say, after contemplating this melancholy and most extraordinary account, whether the flattering descriptions of human nature, which some men, who would lay exclusive claims to reason and philosophy, affect to give, or the humiliating statements of the Bible on the same subject, are best confirmed by matter of fact. Let the serious Christian also determine, whether the attempts of those who, however correct in many of their sentiments, would yet palliate the corruption which they do not undertake to deny, be not practically exposed by the unerring test of experience. Surely the character of this miserable assassin, and of the few detestable spirits in the country who are said, if not to approve the deed, yet to extenuate its enormity, strengthen all the overwhelming proofs which are continually forced upon us, of the fall of man, and the total corruption of human nature. It is true, indeed, that but few such atrocious instances of assassination as the one

before us occur in the annals of our empire; but the seeds of evil are in the hearts of all; and, though they may, in many instances, be in a considerable measure kept under by outward restraints, only need the concurrence of long indulgence with favourable circumstances and strong temptations, to shew themselves in something of the same dreadful manner. It is important then to contemplate, in such cases as the present, the real amount of human apostacy, and to trace back the deadly fruits of sin to the root of a fallen nature, from which they grow. The great doctrine of original sin lies at the foundation of all revealed religion. The whole scheme of redemption supposes it, and is built upon it. A penitent conviction of it is essential to the very existence of practical religion. Man is, in the language of our Church, “very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil.” He requires an entire renovation by the mighty operation of the Holy Ghost. And till his pride be so far humbled as to lead him deeply to feel and acknowledge these elementary truths, he has not taken the very first step towards a return to God.

We may observe, in the next place, *How*

dreadful is the nature of sin! The ministers of religion are secretly suspected, and even sometimes openly charged, with dwelling on its enormity in terms more gloomy and alarming than the real case can require. But let the reader here view sin in its consequences! Let him mark whither pride, and selfishness, and self-will, and ambition, and covetousness, and revenge, may lead a man! Let him see what a monster of wickedness they may eventually make of him! Let him behold how, under peculiar irritations, they spurn, on the one hand, all the laws of God, and trample, on the other hand, on the highest interests of men. Let him view them in their desolating progress, spreading misery and woe, both in the scenes of private life and in the more public theatre of the world, in the present state of being; and hastening the total destruction of body and soul in that which is to come. And if the effects of sin be always pernicious, and, when fully developed, perfectly monstrous, let him learn to abhor and forsake it universally. Let him, notwithstanding its fascinating appearances, and the mask it sometimes assumes, account it the greatest evil, or, properly speaking, the only evil in the

world; and let his main care be bestowed in detecting and mortifying its power in his heart, and in cultivating, by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, every opposite Christian grace and virtue.

But, *The gradual progress of iniquity* must be noticed, not less than its dreadful nature. Its subtle method of attack incalculably increases the danger to which we are exposed. It is impossible, one would think, to glance over the insinuating, yet certain, advances of sin in the mind of Bellingham, as they appear on the very face of his history, without shuddering at the view. To compare his advantages for virtue with his rapid progress in vice; his first days with his last; the religious instructions of his youth with the obduracy of his mature years; the convictions he received of the importance of religion in his former days, with the callousness and insensibility of his heart in the close of life, is surely enough to deter the young, and especially those who have been favoured, like him, with a religious education, from the first entrance upon courses of iniquity, and to shew them the fatal declivity, by which the sinner is hurried downward in his career, and is, at length, im-

penetrably “hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” Probably no reader of this account more trembles at the crime it details, than the perpetrator of it would himself have trembled, if his own future conduct had been declared to him at an early stage of his fatal progress. Like Hazael, he would have said, “But what, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing? *” We must then guard, not merely against flagrant crimes themselves, but against that which may lead to the commission of them, the appearance and first approach of evil. Let us never venture to violate conscience in the smallest things, lest we should be eventually induced to trample on it in the greatest. Let us suspect ourselves, and maintain, so to speak, a military watch over our hearts. Let us endeavour carefully to ascertain what sins have the easiest access to our minds, and then beware, lest our judgments should gradually become perverted, with respect to them, by the disorder of our affections, and our souls inextricably entangled in the snares of evil. We may not be in danger; it is probable we

* 2 Kings viii. 13.

are not; from iniquities of the same description as Bellingham. But let us remember, that the poison of sin may be working its secret way in us; in a different channel indeed, but still in one which, unless we detect its operation, may as effectually prevent our repentance, and as certainly ruin our souls. Whatever stands between us and subjection to the grace of Christ, if it be not removed, can have but one end, our eternal perdition. If, therefore, the things of sense, the love of the world, the pursuits of vanity, the trifling follies of the day, the desire of distinction among men, sober sensuality, or measured voluptuousness, however they may be connected with an attention to the ordinary proprieties of life and some of the external duties of religion, are in fact governing our hearts; we may, indeed, at present be exempt from those outrages on common decency and the good of society which would interfere with our reputation, our interests, our health, or our habits; but we are still dead as to God and religion; we are insensibly becoming more indifferent, however little we may be conscious of the fact, to all the demands of vital Christianity; and, if we awake not from

the fearful lethargy, we shall inevitably perish, as the prophet speaks, with a "lie in our right hand."

Again, we may remark, *How direful are the consequences of imagining that we can be absolved, under any circumstances, from the authority of an express law of God!* This unhappy criminal appears to have so filled his imagination with his distinctions and exemptions, and so persuaded himself that the peculiarity of his wrongs altered the entire nature of the act he meditated, that, although that act was murder, he at length professed to consider himself justified in perpetrating it; and vainly conceived that, on the plea of injuries, of the truth of which he assumed to himself the authority of judging, he was warranted in executing, under the name of justice, what was in fact the foulest revenge. I do not so much observe on the wickedness of the delusion in his case; the whole nation shudders at the principles of Bellingham as much as at his crime; but I remark how fatal is the tendency of any similar pretence, in whatever way it may operate. What confusion must it not introduce! What a door must it not open to every enormity! If any one divine

precept may be thus violated, why may not another? And why may not the whole law be thus made void, till at last every duty to God and man be suspended on human caprice and passion? How unalterably, then, should it be fixed in our minds, that no circumstances can change the nature of right and wrong, no dispensation dissolve the authority of the divine law! Sin is sin still, by whatever fair name it may be disguised; and is, in fact, only aggravated by the pleas which are employed to defend it. And how widely does this remark, which no one surely can controvert, extend, when traced out to its obvious consequences! How numerous are the cases in which men practically substitute some invention of their own mind; some imaginary standard of morals, some law of fashion, some dictate of what is falsely called honour, some custom of trade, some prescription of habit, not to say some unblushing device of pride or sensuality, in the place of the holy and most express commands of God! The ingenuity of the human mind in its own cause is so great, the selfishness of the heart so powerful, and the perversion of the understanding frequently so gross, that, when any

object is ardently pursued, we too commonly learn to explain away the precepts which would curb our inclinations, or forbid our progress; and thus venture, under the mask of some flattering discovery, to vindicate the gratification of our most unlawful desires.

The necessity of *A constant vigilance against the temptations of the Devil*, may be next noticed. Murder is, indeed, eminently his dark work. "He was a murderer from the beginning." In the dreadful assassin before us there seems to have been a cool and frightful determination of mind, a gratification of wanton malice, a lust of revenge without one single hope of advancing his own interest, a purely diabolical operation, which is perfectly terrific. Whilst we justly tremble, then, at these direful passions, thus developed in their full consequences, let us remember that pride, anger, wrath, malice, hatred, envy, strife, emulation, jealousy, however harmless they may at present appear, are the seeds from which they grow; and that the temptations of our great adversary are directed in each case to foment and increase them, till they reach the same desperate issue. The tender and well-instructed conscience will therefore oppose these tempta-

tions in their first approaches, encouraged by the promise, that if “we resist the devil, he will flee from us* ;” and remembering the emphatic declaration, “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer : and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him †.”

It may be further observed, *How small is the benefit of mere knowledge without a corresponding state of the heart and affections!* We are far too apt to estimate our religion by what we know, rather than by what we do. Especially are we in danger of this, if we have enjoyed from our youth, without sufficiently improving, the advantage of pious instructions. But what did mere knowledge, without genuine repentance and faith, effect in the criminal before us? It afforded him just that measure of information which enabled him to abuse the truths he did not love, and would not obey. The bare notices he retained in his understanding, were only the occasions of the grossest self-delusion. We are in fact what our hearts are. If the affections be occupied with pride and revenge, our acquaintance with religion, be it what it may, having lost all its practical influence, will only be employed

* James iv. 7.

† 1 John iii. 15.

to strengthen or excuse our determination to evil. The same doctrine which might have been “a savour of life unto life,” will now become “a savour of death unto death* ;” and, instead of being our guide in the way to heaven, will only quicken our descent in the road of destruction, and increase our final condemnation. “If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them †.”

I proceed again to remark, that *The principal reliance, of a religious nature, on which the mind of Bellingham appeared to repose, too much resembles that of a numerous class of professed Christians.* I refer to his trust to a general confession of sin without any real compunction, and a general trust in the mercy of God without any faith in the atonement and mediation of Jesus Christ. This is the main error of thousands. I cannot be supposed to compare the sins of the persons to whom I now allude, with those of this vile culprit ; but I mean distinctly to affirm, that to stop short in perfunctory and unmeaning generalities in religion, to the total disregard of a radical and effectual change of heart by the sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit, of an

* 2 Cor. ii. 16.

† John xiii. 17.

humble application to Jesus Christ for pardon and justification, and of an entire dedication of the whole heart and life to the service of God, is not peculiar to this dreadful criminal. It is the covert but ordinary refuge of numbers among those who are not deeply impressed with the necessity of practical religion, or who are not acting on the impression. They thus persuade themselves that they have repentance and faith, when in truth they have no real pretensions to either; and harden their hearts against the invitations and commands of God in his Gospel.

Let us then, in the last place, all learn *The importance of real and vital Christianity*. Till we are born of God, partakers of the Holy Ghost, united to Jesus Christ by faith, interested in his merits, justified by his grace, and governed by his laws; in other words, till we are really and practically religious; whatever may be the varieties of our character, whatever our claim to respect on the ground of our general conduct in society, whatever our regard to the forms of religion, whatever our knowledge, our profession, our talents, or our confidence, we are still destitute of the only spring of true peace, the favour and love of God; we have

no adequate resource in sorrow, we have no real support against temptation, we have no abiding stay in trouble, we have no holy tranquillity here, we have no scriptural hope of joy beyond the grave; we are yet under the dominion and condemnation of our sins, and, living and dying in this state, we can never escape the wrath to come. True Christianity is the only remedy of man's condition as a sinner. Without this, all inferior and partial alleviations, however useful they may affect to be, are not capable of supplying the grand want of man, a recovery from the ruin of the fall. Let him then, who trembles at sin, as exhibited in its most dreadful operations in the case before us, flee from it also in its more ordinary but still most tremendous effects on men in general. Let him turn to God in Christ Jesus. Let him begin the great work of repentance without delay. Let him implore the grace of the Holy Spirit to assist and strengthen his resolutions. Let him bow to the sceptre of the Redeemer. Let him view by faith the transforming glories of the Cross. Thus shall he find to his own salvation the excellency and suitableness of the Gospel. While others may dispute about truth, he will

feel its healing efficacy. He will know that the cause of all the misery in the world is sin, and that the only effectual cure of it is the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ.

And, if these pages should catch the eye of any one, who, though he may not as yet have proceeded so far, is still treading in some one or more of the steps of this desperate criminal, O! let him listen to the friendly voice of mercy, ere pride and selfishness have ripened into their full effects! Has he been spurning the yoke of parental authority? Has he followed the self-will of his own heart? Has he drowned the voice of conscience, quenched the influences of the Holy Spirit, and violated all the restraints of a religious education? Has he persisted in his course, notwithstanding remarkable deliverances on the one hand, and repeated chastisements on the other? Has he been plunging into hazardous and immoderate speculations, and been throwing that blame on others which he alone deserves himself; perhaps accusing, with hardened effrontery, the public ministers of the empire with the consequences of his own follies? Has he been brooding, in sullen and impenitent dejection, over his calamities, and forgetting

the duties of patience, forgiveness of injuries, and submission to God? O! let him pause in his mad career. Let him review the progress he has already made in the road to misery, and tremble at the precipice which opens under his feet. Let him behold, in the case of Bellingham, of what the human heart is at length capable. Let him implore of God the gift of his Spirit, ere he be delivered over to final obduracy! Let him pray that that conscience, which he has done so much to harden, may not be finally seared! Let him open, with holy submission, the word of God which he has so long neglected. And thus, in genuine abhorrence of his past sins, let him "lay his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope." Deplorable as his situation may be, still let him not despair of that abundant mercy of God in Christ Jesus, which is able to pardon and renew the "chief of sinners;" but, obediently employing every means of religious improvement, let him look up to God for that direction and grace which may enable him to return to the paths of rectitude, dispose him to repair, in every possible manner, the injuries he may have done to his family and to the community, and lead him to that

true contrition for sin, that humble faith in the satisfaction of Jesus Christ, and that renovation of heart and life by the operation of the Holy Ghost, which can alone heal his wounded spirit, instil peace and tranquillity into his heart, make him holy and happy on earth, and prepare him for the presence and enjoyment of God in heaven!

THE END.

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